

Liberty, Democracy and Media

HUMS3001 Lecture Two
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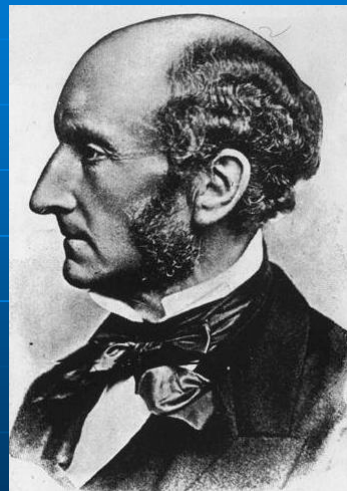
Lecture Overview

- **"Liberty":**
 - definitions, freedom from..., freedom to..., tyranny, limits of power, diversity of opinion
- **"Democracy":**
 - links to liberalism, separation of powers, Australian democracy, liberal democracy
- **"The Fourth Estate":**
 - role of media in democracy, links to liberalism

Lecture Questions

- What are some ways to think about the relationship between individuals, society and government?
- How does our political/social context shape our “liberty”?
- Is Jamie Oliver the J.S. Mill of the twenty-first century?
- Or is Margaret Pomeranz?

- J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (1859)
- Philosophical context, social context, global context
- elitist, anti-democratic, colonialist



On Liberty (1859)

Liberty is:

- a) freedom for the individual to pursue happiness
- b) the individual's freedom from tyranny
- c) proper limits on power

On Liberty (1859)

Liberty is:

- a) freedom for the individual to pursue happiness
 - consequentialism/utilitarianism
 - intellectual, aesthetic, social/communal

On Liberty (1859)

Liberty is:

b) the individual's freedom from tyranny

- governmental / political
- majoritarianism / conformism: "invades the soul"

On Liberty (1859)

Liberty is:

c) proper limits on power

- power: social, governmental, *and* individual
- limits are contextually determined

On Liberty (1859)

- Harm Principle:

“the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (72-3).

On Liberty (1859)

“This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty [...]”:

- liberty of **thought**, feeling and opinion
 - liberty of **expressing/publishing** opinion
 - liberty of **tastes and pursuits**
 - liberty of **association**
- “[...] No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free”

On Liberty (1859)

■ Key terms:

- individual
- reason
- harm / evil
- “justly accountable”

On Liberty (1859)

■ The patriarchal/humanist/colonial clause:

- “this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties [... who] must be protected against their own actions or external injury [...]

On Liberty (1859)

- The patriarchal/humanist/colonial clause:
 - [...] For the same reason [...] Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians"

On Liberty (1859)

- Themes:
 - rational thought
 - capacity to reason
 - freedom of discourse*
 - diversity of opinion*
 - progress
- * = main contribution to democracy

Democracy

- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA):
 - popular control over decision-making
 - political equality in that control (pluralism and diversity)
 - human rights / civil liberties
 - limits to government power
 - checks and balances (separation of powers)
 - responsible executive
 - vigorous parliamentary opposition

Democracy

- Sarah Maddison in *Silencing Dissent*:
 - democracy is “participatory, representative, accountable, transparent and responsive” (28)
 - “Governments committed to a continuing process of democratisation enhance the authenticity of popular control. [...] Governments that are threatened by participation, particularly by those with whom they disagree, [...] may take steps to ensure that the institutions and practices that would contribute to those people being informed and enabled to mobilise are controlled by the government itself.” (29)

Democracy in Australia

- Representative government in 1850s
- Fathers of Federation read Mill and other British liberals, as well as American liberals
- Phil Griffiths in "Shadow of Mill":
Mill's arguments were read in Australia as
"an indictment against the presence of Chinese
people in the Australian community."
- Federation in 1901 after turbulent debates about
worker's rights and racial destiny

Democracy in Australia

- Terry Irving in *The Southern Tree of Liberty* (2006):
 - "It would be safe to say, in fact, that **most Australians today are not democrats**, that is, people who believe in popular rule. While a tiny majority **demonstrate and criticise publicly**, and think of themselves as political beings, the majority of citizens believe that parliamentary government is all that democracy means, and that voting completes their contribution to it. " (251)

Media and Democracy

- Economou and Tanner:
 - The “Fourth Estate” is vital to liberal democracy.
 - (Inadequate) foundations of free media:
 - 📁 separation of powers, so that the media is free from direct state control
 - 📁 privately-owned media where the products are sold/traded in a variety of public marketplaces

Media and Democracy

- Relationship of media to liberal democracy:
 - checks and balance
 - restrict government power
 - preserve individual liberty
 - inform citizenry
 - keep government transparent

Media and Democracy

- Roles of media in liberal democracy:
 - Inform the public / reveal government
 - government watchdog / hold government accountable
 - Forum for diverse opinion / active opposition
 - (Entertainment – does it corrode civic political culture)

Media and Democracy

- Critical projects to do with liberty, democracy and media:
 - criticise the concepts as inadequate
 - highlight biases (animal rights, environmental issues, privatisation)
 - read the concepts as ideals
 - democratise the media